# Summer Reading Challenge Impact Evaluation

## Brief summary of the project

[The Reading Agency](https://readingagency.org.uk/), in partnership with the Association of Senior Children’s and Education Librarians (ASCEL) and Libraries Connected, has been awarded a grant from Arts Council England to conduct a large-scale independent study of the [Summer Reading Challenge](https://summerreadingchallenge.org.uk/). [Renaisi](http://www.renaisi.com), an award-winning social enterprise, were selected to undertake this piece of research.

The Summer Reading Challenge is one of the country’s biggest reading for pleasure programmes, reaching children aged 4-11 years across the socio-economic spectrum. The Challenge, run in over 95% of UK libraries, offers children and families an enjoyable, free activity in the six-week summer break from school when reading skills and confidence can dip, commonly known as the ‘summer slide’.

This funding will allow The Reading Agency to evaluate the impact of the Summer Reading Challenge on the ‘summer slide’ in relation to both reading skills and reading enjoyment. A secondary aim is to explore the role a public library-based reading activity like the Summer Reading Challenge can have on building wider school and family engagement with reading.

## Engagement

We are looking to engage with schools in two different ways – light-touch and in-depth. Those involved in a **light touch** way will be asked to provide assessment data for children (both Challenge participants and those not taking part), which relates to their reading ability from before the summer holidays and after the summer holidays. We would use this data to look at trends across schools and understand the effects the challenge has on combatting the ‘summer slide’. We may also provide some resources for schools to undertake their own activities to understand the impacts of the Challenge – this will be discussed with the schools to understand whether this is feasible and what they might be able to do and share with us.

Those involved **in-depth** will be asked to share their data in the same way. This will also involve a researcher visiting the school for one day in the summer term, and one day in the autumn term. During their visits the researcher will conduct interviews with children and teachers who both are and are not engaged in the Challenge. On the return visit, headteachers will also be interviewed where possible, a survey sent out to parents involved in the challenge, and a focus group conducted with parents not involved in the challenge. Researchers at Renaisi will liaise with each school individually to understand how best to implement this.

Those schools involved will be offered an anonymised data output – enabling them to understand reading habits in the school and trends in those taking part in the Summer Reading Challenge and those not. Additionally, those involved in a more in-depth way will be offered the option of a visual output in the form of a poster or info-graphic, as a case study demonstrating the findings from the research carried out in that school.

## Sampling

We are aiming for a balanced sample of schools engaged from across England. The overall number of schools involved will be **20**. The schools engaged should be broken down in the following way, with 2 from each region (one in-depth and 1 light touch) and an additional two sampled randomly from others:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **In-depth:**  **9 case studies** | **Regional split** | **Urban/rural**  **(allocation tbc)** | **Summer Reading Challenge engagement**  **(allocation tbc)** |
| London | 1 | 5 Urban  *(including suburbs of a major or conurbation*  *city or town)*  5 Rural  *(in a sparse area, including a small town and fringe; village; or hamlet)* | 7 consistent engagement  *(the school consistently engages with the Challenge and a high proportion of students at the school engage in the challenge each year)*  3 varied engagement  *(the school has been engaged on and off over recent years, or engaged to varying degrees. A smaller proportion of young people engage in the challenge; or a large proportion initially engage but do not complete the Challenge)* |
| South East | 1 |
| South West | 1 |
| East Midlands | 1 |
| West Midlands | 1 |
| North West | 1 |
| North East | 1 |
| East of England | 1 |
| Yorkshire and Humber | 1 |
| Any region | 1 |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Light touch**  **9 case studies** | **Regional split** | **Urban/rural**  **(allocation tbc)** | **Summer Reading Challenge engagement**  **(allocation tbc)** |
| London | 1 | 5 Urban  5 Rural | 7 consistent engagement  3 varied engagement |
| South East | 1 |
| South West | 1 |
| East Midlands | 1 |
| West Midlands | 1 |
| North West | 1 |
| North East | 1 |
| East of England | 1 |
| Yorkshire and Humber | 1 |
| Any region | 1 |

In addition, the schools sampled will need to be based in a deprived area, which is not one of the Department for Educations 12 opportunity areas (highlighted in orange). The table below sets out the local authorities ranked and placed in the bottom three deciles for multiple deprivation – putting them in the bottom 30% of authorities. We would recommend that schools are based within the authorities below which are not opportunity areas:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Decile one | Decile two | Decile three |
| Manchester | East Lindsey | North East Lincolnshire |
| Hackney | Tameside | Boston |
| Barking and Dagenham | Thanet | Torridge |
| Blackpool | Halton | Cornwall |
| Knowsley | Barnsley | Camden |
| Tower Hamlets | Sunderland | Ashfield |
| Liverpool | Brent | Harlow |
| Newham | Luton | Preston |
| Kingston upon Hull, City of | Walsall | Wakefield |
| Nottingham | Pendle | Ipswich |
| Birmingham | Westminster | Corby |
| Sandwell | Barrow-in-Furness | Hammersmith and Fulham |
| Islington | Lincoln | Bristol, City of |
| Leicester | Torbay | Redcar and Cleveland |
| Waltham Forest | Norwich | Slough |
| Middlesbrough | Doncaster | Gateshead |
| Burnley | Tendring | County Durham |
| Stoke-on-Trent | Greenwich | Plymouth |
| Wolverhampton | Oldham | Isle of Wight |
| Hastings | St. Helens | Derby |
| Haringey | Enfield | Chesterfield |
| Lambeth | Southampton | Hounslow |
| Southwark | Fenland | Ealing |
| Blackburn with Darwen | West Somerset | Swale |
| Rochdale | Portsmouth | King's Lynn and West Norfolk |
| Lewisham | Peterborough | Scarborough |
| Salford | Mansfield | Croydon |
| Hyndburn | Coventry | Newcastle upon Tyne |
| Great Yarmouth | Bolsover | North Norfolk |
| Bradford | Rotherham | Sheffield |
| South Tyneside | Copeland | Waveney |
| Hartlepool | Bolton | Calderdale |
|  |  | Telford and Wrekin |

However, these rankings are based on the Local Authority area, and recognise that within these local authorities deprivation is often highly unequal. When identifying schools to participate it will be important to use judgement to ensure that the specific school is working within a deprived area of the local authority and reaching young people from deprived communities.

Additional sampling criteria may also be considered by the team at Renaisi upon receiving the long-list of potential schools to be engaged. This may include information such as OFSTED grade or level of pupil premium.

## Participation Criteria

As well as meeting the sampling criteria, in order to fit within the parameters of this project and to ensure the smooth running of the research, the schools must:

* Be working with children ages 4-11
* Have reading assessments taking place with results available before the Summer Reading Challenge period and again in the autumn term. Ideally, these should be tests results, but we would be open to discussing with schools if teacher assessment scores could be used instead – depending on the format of these
* Have been involved in the Summer Reading Challenge for at least 2 years
* Be in a deprived area (but not one of the Department for Education opportunity areas)
* Have the buy in from the senior leadership team for the school to be involved in the research - e.g. willing to support and endorse the research across the staff team
* Be able to appoint a key contact to liaise with Renaisi on sharing data and arranging visits (where appropriate)
* *For in-depth* – must be able and willing to facilitate a researcher coming to visit once in the summer term and once in the autumn term

*Note:*

We acknowledge that schools may require staff cover for the time that teachers are involved with the project. We have included an allocation within the budget to cover teacher time so that if a teacher is involved in research with sample pupils or interviews with the researchers, money for either teacher cover or a supply teacher is factored in to reimburse the school. Based on NASUWT (the teachers’ union) [pay scales](https://www.nasuwt.org.uk/uploads/assets/uploaded/9a65a9b7-4121-4b10-8509b5eb70f59ec4.pdf) for supply teachers and the assumption of one day of supply cover needed per school, we’ve averaged £205 (one day’s rate) for schools. The actual amount schools would be reimbursed if they needed supply cover would vary based on the cost of supply teaching in that region, i.e., costs for Inner London and Outer London are higher than those elsewhere in England.

## Any questions?

Thank you for your help in either recruiting schools or considering taking part of this important piece of research. We are looking forward to the opportunity to exploring these questions further and demonstrating the impact of the Summer Reading Challenge on children across England. Any questions can be directed to the following:

Dr Carina Spaulding

Research & Evaluation Manager, The Reading Agency

Email: [carina.spaulding@readingagency.org.uk](mailto:carina.spaulding@readingagency.org.uk)

Phone: 0207 324 2551